



**Montana Fish,  
Wildlife & Parks**



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## **Lone Pine State Park Indian Education For All Lesson Plan**

### **Title**

Lone Pine- Cultural Fire Management

### **Content Area(s)**

History; Social Studies

### **Grade level**

4th

### **Duration**

50 minutes

### **Goals (Montana Standards/Essential Understandings)**

**ESSENTIAL UNDERSTANDING 1:** There is great diversity among the 12 tribal Nations of Montana in their languages, cultures, histories and governments. Each Nation has a distinct and unique cultural heritage that contributes to modern Montana.

**ESSENTIAL UNDERSTANDING 3:** The ideologies of Native traditional beliefs and spirituality persist into modern day life as tribal cultures, traditions and languages are still practiced by many American Indian people and are incorporated into how tribes govern and manage their affairs. Additionally, each tribe has its own oral history beginning with their origins that are as valid as written histories. These histories pre-date the “discovery” of North America.

**ESSENTIAL UNDERSTANDING 6:** History is a story and most often related through the subjective experience of the teller. Histories are being rediscovered and revised. History told from an Indian perspective conflicts with what most of mainstream history tells us.

**Social Studies Content 3:** Students apply geographic knowledge and skills (e.g., location, place, human/environment interactions, movement, and regions).

**Social Studies Content Standard 4:** Students demonstrate an understanding of the effects of time, continuity, and change on historical and future perspectives and relationships.

**Speaking and Listening Content Standard 4:** Students identify, analyze, and evaluate the impacts of effective speaking and evaluative listening.

**Reading Content Standard 5:** Students gather, analyze, synthesize, and evaluate information from a variety of sources, and communicate their findings in ways appropriate for their purposes and audiences.

**Science Content Standard 3:** Students demonstrate knowledge of characteristics, structures and function of living things, the process and diversity of life, and how living organisms interact with each other and their environment.

## Overview

***Lone Pine State Park, with its abundance of forest, is an ideal place to study the use of fire by Native peoples as a management tool.***

*Fire was an important tool widely used by Native Americans. It was part of their everyday life. Fire had many uses: reducing the undergrowth thereby opening up the area for more food plants such as berries; clearing the land for crops; and hunting-driving game in an open woods was quieter and easier to move through when hunting. For a long time it was believed that the Native Americans had little impact on the land they inhabited, taking only what was needed and moving on. However this version of history is not true. Native Americans and in fact all people have changed the landscape they live on to meet their needs for survival and growth. Fires were purposely set by Native Americans for many reasons all critical for their survival: providing food, places to live, safety, and in warfare.*

– from USDA Forest Service Northeastern Area ([www.na.fs.fed.us/fire\\_poster/nativeamer.htm](http://www.na.fs.fed.us/fire_poster/nativeamer.htm))

### How did Native Americans use fire?

What follows is a list of documented reasons for one change to ecosystems – that of intentional burning. Involve the class in a discussion of these reasons and see if they can think of more reasons. This activity has greatly modified landscapes across the continent in many subtle ways that have often been interpreted as "natural" by the early explorers, trappers, and settlers. Even many research scientists who study pre-settlement forest fire evidence tend to attribute most prehistoric fires as being caused by lightning (natural) rather than humans. This problem arises because there was no systematic record keeping of these fire events. Thus the interaction of people and ecosystems is downplayed or ignored, which often leads to the conclusion that people are a problem in "natural" ecosystems rather than the primary force in their development. There are at least 11 documented reasons for American Indian ecosystem burning:

- Hunting - Burning of large areas to divert big game (deer, elk, bison) into small unburned areas for easier hunting and provide open prairies/meadows (rather than brush and tall trees) where animals (including ducks and geese) like to dine on fresh, new grass sprouts. Fire was also used to drive game into impoundments, narrow chutes, into rivers or lakes, or over cliffs where the animals could be killed. Some tribes used a surrounding fire to drive rabbits into small areas where they could be easily killed for food. The Seminoles even practiced hunting alligators with fire.
- Crop management - Burning used in certain parts of the country to harvest crops, especially tarweed, yucca, greens, and grass seed collection. In addition, fire was used to prevent abandoned fields from growing over and to clear areas for tobacco. One report of fire being used to bring rain (overcome drought).
- Improve growth and yields - Fire used to improve grass for big game grazing (deer, elk, antelope, bison, and later horses), camas reproduction, seed plants, berry plants (especially raspberries, strawberries, and huckleberries), and tobacco.
- Fireproof areas - Some indications that fire was used to protect certain medicine plants by clearing an area around the plants, as well as to fireproof areas, especially around settlements, from destructive wildfires. Fire was also used to keep prairies open from encroaching shrubs and trees.
- Insect collection - Using a "fire surround" to collect & roast crickets, grasshoppers, and smoke was used to drive bees from their hives to collect honey.
- Pest management - Burning used to reduce insects (black flies & mosquitoes) and rodents, as well as kill mistletoe that invaded the fir and pine trees of the forest.

- Warfare - Use of fire to deprive the enemy of hiding places in tall grasses and underbrush in the woods for defense, as well as using fire for offensive reasons, signaling, etc.
- Economic Extortion - Some tribes also used fire for a "scorched-earth" policy to deprive settlers and fur traders from easy access to big game and thus benefiting from being "middlemen" in supplying pemmican and jerky.
- Clearing areas for travel - Fires started to clear trails for travel through areas that were overgrown with grass or brush. Fire helped with providing better visibility through forests and brush lands.
- Felling trees - Felling trees by boring two intersecting holes with hot charcoal dropped in one hole, smoke exiting from the other. Another way was to simply kill the tree at the base by surrounding it with fire. Fire also used to kill trees for dry kindling (willows) and firewood (aspen).
- Clearing Riparian Areas - Fire used to clear brush from riparian areas and marshes for new grasses and tree sprouts (to benefit beaver, muskrats, moose, and waterfowl).  
*From William, G.W. 2000. Introduction to Aboriginal Fire Use in North America. Fire Management Today. 60(3):8-12*

## Goals

- This lesson seeks to:
  - Introduce students to the relationship between the native people and the land;
  - Convey to students that fire was a management tool for the native people;
  - Introduce or enhance student's cultural research skills; and
  - Help students appreciate and value the cultures and traditions of native people.

## Suggested Teaching Approaches

- Involve students in the planning of learning experiences about the Indian tribes of Western Montana. These planned experiences may include: the gathering of information about the native people of western Montana, a visit to Lone Pine State Park to see the unique landscape, the geography and geology, a visit to museums with a Native American focus, like the Peoples Center in Pablo Montana.. Make plans for accessing, organizing, and presenting information.
- Use of literature material, biographies of the local people, and oral histories is encouraged.
- Information may be organized and shared in a variety of ways, including: maps, graphs, charts, posters, pictures, dioramas, models, displays, interviews, and stories.

## Teachers Preparation

For an overview of the use of fire by native people, visit the following websites

- [www.werc.usgs.gov/news/2002-04-24a.html](http://www.werc.usgs.gov/news/2002-04-24a.html)
- [http://www.cskt.org/fire\\_history.swf](http://www.cskt.org/fire_history.swf)
- [www.cpluhna.nau.edu/Change/native\\_fire.htm](http://www.cpluhna.nau.edu/Change/native_fire.htm)
- [www.wildlandfire.com/docs/biblio\\_indianfire.htm](http://www.wildlandfire.com/docs/biblio_indianfire.htm)
- [www.forestencyclopedia.net/Encyclopedia/Fire%20Science/4\\_fire\\_people/Encyclopedia\\_Page.2003-12-22.1208/Encyclopedia\\_Page.2004-02-28.3637](http://www.forestencyclopedia.net/Encyclopedia/Fire%20Science/4_fire_people/Encyclopedia_Page.2003-12-22.1208/Encyclopedia_Page.2004-02-28.3637)
- <http://anthropology.buffalo.edu/Documents/firebib>

Fire has been an important part of the traditional stories of native people. For more information, read "How the Coyote Stole Fire," a legend from the Shasta tribe (included in lesson).

## Extensions

- Invite a tribal member from the Confederated Salish & Kootenai Tribes to your classroom to learn about the use of fire by the native people.
- **Check out these great books to learn more about the tribes of the Flathead Nation.**
  - *Coyote stories of the Montana Salish Indians* by Johnny Arlee
  - Salish Kootenai College Press, 1999. *Stories From our Elders* Salish Culture Committee Publications
  - *In the Name of the Salish & Kootenai Nation* Bigart,, Robert, Clarence Woodcock ed. Salish Kootenai College Press 1996
  - *Indian Trails of the Northern Rockies* Flanagan, Darris - Stoneydale Press
- **Websites**
  - [www.anamp.org/nescp\\_curriculum/pdf/FlatheadOverview.pdf](http://www.anamp.org/nescp_curriculum/pdf/FlatheadOverview.pdf)  
Good historical overview of the Flathead Reservation

## Activity – Writing a story

This activity could be done in groups as well as individually. Ask the student to imagine that they are in a valley in western Montana in traditional times (prehistoric). They are part of a larger group of native people who live in the valley. It is a warm spring day with the wind blowing lightly and the elders of the camp have decided to set a fire to clear brush and to plant tobacco, and to provide a better habitat for edible plants; for deer, elk and moose, animals that the camp needs to hunt. You might want to build these ideas into your story:

- Time of year – later in the spring
- Days are warm, the nights are cool
- Days are getting longer
- Busy time of year
- Animals are more active after the long winter
- You need to be careful with fire (set by adults)
- A little breeze, not a hard wind
- The camp needs the land cleared for hunting and gathering
- You need to watch the fire and make sure it doesn't get out of control

### EVALUATION:

**Discussion/observation**

**Participation**

## How Coyote Stole Fire

### A Shasta Legend

Long ago, when man was newly come into the world, there were days when he was the happiest creature of all. Those were the days when spring brushed across the willow tails, or when his children ripened with the blueberries in the sun of summer, or when the goldenrod bloomed in the autumn haze.

But always the mists of autumn evenings grew more chill, and the sun's strokes grew shorter. Then man saw winter moving near, and he became fearful and unhappy. He was afraid for his children, and for the grandfathers and grandmothers who carried in their heads the sacred tales of the tribe. Many of these, young and old, would die in the long, ice bitter months of winter.

Coyote, like the rest of the People, had no need for fire. So he seldom concerned himself with it, until one spring day when he was passing a human village. There the women were singing a song of mourning for the babies and the old ones who had died in the winter. Their voices moaned like the west wind through a buffalo skull, prickling the hairs on Coyote's neck.

"Feel how the sun is now warm on our backs," one of the men was saying. "Feel how it warms the earth and makes these stones hot to the touch. If only we could have had a small piece of the sun in our tipi's during the winter."

Coyote, overhearing this, felt sorry for the men and women. He also felt that there was something he could do to help them. He knew of a faraway mountaintop where the three Fire Beings lived. These Beings kept fire to themselves, guarding it carefully for fear that man might somehow acquire it and become as strong as they. Coyote saw that he could do a good turn for man at the expense of these selfish Fire Beings.

So Coyote went to the mountain of the Fire Beings and crept to its top, to watch the way that the Beings guarded their fire. As he came near, the Beings leaped to their feet and gazed searchingly round their camp. Their eyes glinted like bloodstones, and their hands were clawed like the talons of the great black vulture.

"What's that? What's that I hear?" hissed one of the Beings.

"A thief, skulking in the bushes!" screeched another.

The third looked more closely, and saw Coyote. But he had gone to the mountain top on all fours, so the Being thought she saw only an ordinary coyote slinking among the trees.

"It is no one, it is nothing!" she cried, and the other two looked where she pointed and also saw only a gray coyote. They sat down again by their fire and paid Coyote no more attention.

So he watched all day and night as the Fire Beings guarded their fire. He saw how they fed it pine cones and dry branches from the sycamore trees. He saw how they stamped furiously on runaway rivulets of flame that sometimes nibbled outwards on edges of dry grass. He saw also how, at night, the Beings took turns to sit by the fire. Two would sleep while one was on guard; and at certain times the Being by the fire would get up and go into their tipi, and another would come out to sit by the fire.

Coyote saw that the Beings were always jealously watchful of their fire except during one part of the day. That was in the earliest morning, when the first winds of dawn arose on the mountains. Then the Being by the fire would hurry, shivering, into the tipi calling, "Sister, sister, go out and watch the fire." But the next Being would always be slow to go out for her turn, her head spinning with sleep and the thin dreams of dawn.

Coyote, seeing all this, went down the mountain and spoke to some of his friends among the People. He told them of hairless man, fearing the cold and death of winter. And he told them of the Fire Beings, and the warmth and brightness of the flame. They all agreed that man should have fire, and they all promised to help Coyote's undertaking.

Then Coyote sped again to the mountain top. Again the Fire Beings leaped up when he came close, and one cried out, "What's that? A thief, a thief!"

But again the others looked closely, and saw only a gray coyote hunting among the bushes. So they sat down again and paid him no more attention.

Coyote waited through the day, and watched as night fell and two of the Beings went off to the tipi to sleep. He watched as they changed over at certain times all the night long, until at last the dawn winds rose. Then the Being on guard called, "Sister, sister, get up and watch the fire." And the Being whose turn it was climbed slow and sleepy from her bed, saying, "Yes, yes, I am coming. Do not shout so." But before she could come out of the tipi, Coyote lunged from the bushes, snatched up a glowing portion of fire, and sprang away down the mountain side.

Screaming, the Fire Beings flew after him. Swift as Coyote ran, they caught up with him, and one of them reached out a clutching hand. Her fingers touched only the tip of the tail, but the touch was enough to turn the hairs white, and coyote tailpipes are white still. Coyote shouted, and flung the fire away from him. But the others of the People had gathered at the mountain's foot, in case they were needed. Squirrel saw the fire falling, and caught it, putting it on her back and fleeing away through the treetops. The fire scorched her back so painfully that her tail curled up and back, as squirrels' tails still do today.

The Fire Beings then pursued Squirrel, who threw the fire to Chipmunk. Chattering with fear, Chipmunk stood still as if rooted until the Beings were almost upon her. Then, as she turned to run, one Being clawed at her, tearing down the length of her back and leaving three stripes that are to be seen on chipmunks' backs even today. Chipmunk threw the fire to Frog, and the Beings turned towards him. One of the Beings grasped his tail, but Frog gave a mighty leap and tore himself free, leaving his tail behind in the Being's hand - which is why frogs have had no tails ever since.

As the Beings came after him again, Frog flung the fire on to Wood. And Wood swallowed it. The Fire Beings gathered round, but they did not know how to get the fire out of Wood. They promised it gifts, sang to it and shouted at it. They twisted it and struck it and tore it with their knives. But Wood did not give up the fire. In the end, defeated, the Beings went back to their mountaintop and left the People alone.

But Coyote knew how to get fire out of Wood. And he went to the village of men and showed them how. He showed them the trick of rubbing two dry sticks together, and the trick of spinning a sharpened stick in a hole made in another piece of wood. So man was from then on warm and safe through the killing cold of winter.